



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

# Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

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Wayne F. MacCallum, *Director*

**Winter Fish Kills** – Thick ice and heavy snow cover have resulted in low dissolved oxygen levels in a number of Massachusetts ponds this winter. Increasing ice and snow packs limit light penetration through the water column, altering chemical and biological processes such as photosynthesis and the decomposition of organic matter (dead plants). These conditions can frequently result in a winter fish kill. Ponds that are shallow (less than 15 feet) and weedy are particularly vulnerable. MassWildlife fisheries biologists have recently found low oxygen levels in a number of ponds statewide. Biologists have already received several calls from citizens reporting strong “rotten egg” odors from some bodies of water. The odor is hydrogen sulfide gas which is a natural by-product that occurs in ponds with low dissolved oxygen and is likely not the result of pollution such as illegal dumping, sewage or a chemical spill. Oxygen levels will be fully restored when the ice melts in the spring. At this point winter fish kills often become visible to the public in the form of dead fish on the bottom of the pond or floating at the surface. As a result of the severe conditions this winter, we expect to see higher numbers of winter fish kills than usual. To report a fish kill Monday through Friday between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm, contact Richard Hartley at (508) 389-6330. After normal business hours or on holidays and weekends, contact the Environmental Law Enforcement’s Radio Room at 1-800-632-8075.

[www.mass.gov/masswildlife](http://www.mass.gov/masswildlife)

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